I consider this post to be an addendum to my previous post on the "Flight 93 Election" analogy. If you haven't read that post, go and read it before you read this one.

In the post I released a few days ago discussing whether Michael Anton's "Flight 93 Election" analogy applied to the election Canada currently finds itself in, I differentiated Pierre Poilievre from Donald Trump mostly by discussing the ideological differences that separate the two. However, upon some reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the most significant distinction between the two men is temperamental in nature, not ideological.

Let me explain.

Over four years ago, the clever-yet-underappreciated (at least in my view) YouTuber BostWiki released a video titled "Builders vs. Operators". In it, he describes two separate avenues that individuals can use to climb to the top of a hierarchy. These hierarchies can be political or corporate, yet the strategies for reaching the top are similar for both.

Pierre Poilievre is an operator. He is someone who has methodically climbed his way through the Canadian political system to become the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and has his sights set on the position that would give him the designation *Right Honourable.*

In fact, he has had his sights set on the Prime Ministership for over two decades.

As a 20-year-old undergraduate at the University of Calgary, Pierre submitted a 2,500-word essay called "Building Canada through Freedom" to Magna International's "As Prime Minister, I Would…" essay contest. The contents of the essay are eerily similar to his current rhetoric. Consider, for example, this passage:

> "Therefore, as Prime Minister, what I would *do* to improve living standards is not nearly as important as what I would *not do.* As Prime Minister, I would relinquish to citizens as much of my social, political, and economic control as possible, leaving people to cultivate their own personal prosperity and govern their own affairs as directly as possible."

The libertarianism and the importance of negative freedom that are so central to his current political career are the driving themes of this essay from 1999.

From this, it is reasonable to conclude that he formed a vision of what he sought to achieve very early in life, and then set out to fulfill that vision in an incrementalist and meticulous fashion.

He was first elected to the House of Commons in June 2004 as a 25-year-old, and spent the next year and a half as an opposition backbencher. After the 39th Canadian election in 2006, he received a promotion and became the Parliamentary Secretary to the then-President of the Treasury Board, John Baird. In 2008, he rose further and was made Stephen Harper's personal Parliamentary Secretary. Come 2013, he was appointed to cabinet, albeit as a junior minister (Minister of State for Democratic Reform). Finally, in 2015, he was given a more substantial cabinet job, replacing Jason Kenney as the Employment and Social Development minister.

This promotion proved to be short-lived, however, as he was relegated to the opposition benches following the 2015 election. But that political exile would also be short-lived, as he was named Finance critic after Andrew Scheer became leader in 2017—a position he would use to lambast the Liberal government, increasing his political clout in the process.

By the time he launched his bid to lead the Conservatives in 2022, he had been in Parliament for almost 18 years and had held a myriad of jobs in the place. He had completed a long march through the institution, if you will.

An operator, like Poilievre, is someone who plays by the rules and follows a conventional and structured path to the top of the hierarchy. To do this, they study how the hierarchy operates and then play by its rules to slowly rise through it in a linear progression, much like how one advances in a video game.

Mark Carney, it is worth noting, is also an operator. He has just operated in the separate hierarchies of government bureaucracy and finance, as opposed to partisan politics.

Trump is a builder. Not just in the sense of him creating brick-and-mortar buildings, but also in the sense that he operates outside of pre-existing hierarchies and creates his own infrastructure that allows him to circumvent the paths followed by operators.

Initially starting his career as a New York real estate developer, Trump was able to make his surname into a brand synonymous with luxury, material success, and business acumen by licensing his name to a number of products (Trump Steaks and Trump Vodka being two of the weirder examples) and commissioning the ghostwriting of the book *The Art of the Deal.*

He then leveraged this reputation into a career hosting *The Apprentice,* where he plays a hard-nosed business executive tasked with eliminating contestants on the show ("you're fired").

Compared to the slow and steady political rise of Poilievre, Trump's ascent in politics can best be described as a long, dry spell, followed by a sudden explosion.

In line with his status as a builder, Trump's first foray into politics was not with either of the two legacy parties in American politics, but rather with the Reform Party—itself the creation of another builder, Ross Perot. He launched what was described as a "brief and flamboyant run for President", and his candidacy was, predictably, not taken seriously by the mainstream media—or even others in the party at the time.

During the period before his run in 2016, Trump lacked fidelity to any particular party. After his Reform Party candidacy in 2000, Trump was a registered Democrat during the Bush presidency, before shifting his affiliation to the Republicans in 2009. In short, he was choosing to always identify as the opposite of those in power, which is how he could position himself as an outsider who could stick it to the political establishment and "drain the swamp".

Finally, in 2016, Trump was able to use the personal brand he had been building for decades to his advantage, and triumphed over both the legions of operators running in the Republican Presidential Primary and arch-operator Hillary Clinton to win the Presidency—despite famously lacking any experience in elected office.

Up to this point, what I have described seems like something that is fairly neutral. There are benefits to being a builder instead of an operator, and vice versa. However, due to the nature of the place Canada finds itself in at this moment, I would like to imbue what I have previously said with some analysis, and perhaps a hair of judgment.

Because operators are people who work within the pre-existing system as opposed to creating structures outside of it, they naturally adopt the values and mores that are deemed acceptable within that system.

In politics, operators will, almost without exception, adhere to an ideology that falls within the Overton Window of the jurisdiction they are running in. This is because they need to network and build

connections with people further up the hierarchy than they are in order to advance, and having ideas that differ significantly from those above them in the pecking order will cause conflict and friction, stymying their chances of progression.

Pierre Poilievre, while being more ideologically strident than his predecessors (cough cough, Erin O'Toole), is still a creature of Canada's political establishment and the narrow range of discourse that establishment operates within. He will only adopt positions that are within Canada's Overton Window, and will only change his position on an issue if the Overton Window shifts on said issue. This explains why he shifted his position on gay marriage to the left as gay marriage started gaining bipartisan support; it also explains why he's moved, although only slightly, to the right on immigration as the previous elite consensus on immigration has crumbled. If the Overton Window on immigration happened to shift to the left, I have no doubt that Pierre would change his position accordingly.

Herein lies the problem. Canada is at a point in its trajectory where it desperately needs a leader who is willing to pursue bold, innovative, and imaginative policies, even if such a pursuit makes this leader despised by the elites and a substantial chunk of the Canadian electorate. Pierre, by virtue of his past and status as an operator, looks unlikely to be that leader. This is not a personal slight against him; he is, by far, the best leader the Conservative Party has ever had. I still strongly encourage readers to cast their ballots for the Conservatives. But, despite this, it is important not to be under any illusions about him and recognize that Canada's decline cannot, and will not, be fully reversed should the CPC win on Monday.

Builders are not without their faults. They often pursue risky policies that have catastrophic results. But personally, I would prefer a higher level of risk over managed decline as far as the eye can see.

It is also worth noting that I am not calling for a Canadian replica of Donald Trump. I don't think that sort of brazen and gauche persona

would ever be appealing to the Canadian populace. But, with Canada where it is, merely having a builder would be nice.